



Strengthening Disability Service Coordination for Arizona's Military Families:

What Families and Policymakers Need to Know



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“Larry has served in the Air Force for 20 years. He and his wife have an adult child with a disability who lives in a group home, which provides him with consistent support and care. Larry has just been moved to a new station in a different state where he tried to apply for DDD services, but the wait for that state was so long and was going to leave their child without care for an extended length of time. Larry and his wife had no other choice but to leave their child behind when they moved. They didn't feel like they had a choice.”

– Local navigator for military families

This heartbreaking scenario highlights one of the issues active military families face when moving to or from one of Arizona's seven active bases. The Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) alongside Arizona's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) met with active military families on a local military base in February 2020. The following are some of the top challenges they shared:

- Individuals may wait for months without services until state applications are approved. It can take up to 30 days for families to get approved for DDD and 45 days for the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS).
- Even when active duty families know they will be moving to Arizona months in advance, these families are not allowed to apply for services in Arizona until 30 days before relocating. There is no expedited process for services for active military members.
- Making things even more complicated, eligibility requirements for intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) services vary from state to state. Families opt out of applying for benefits through state systems due to the burden of constantly having to re-apply with each relocation. As a result, their family member with a disability may not obtain all of the support they qualify to receive.

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), available through all United States military branches, supports military families with special medical or educational needs. They connect families with services available at their duty station, providing information, referrals and non-clinical case management. Yet, even with all this support, families are still left with many gaps.

State services, like Arizona's DDD-ALTCS, support families and individuals with I/DD by funding attendant care, respite, habilitation, employment support, housing, therapies, and more. But those services vary from state to state. Eligibility for Medicaid is determined based on criteria such as health status or income, but the federal Medicaid

system allows states considerable leeway in how they deliver Medicaid services and what services are covered.

This is problematic for military families. Military service requires frequent transfers from one military installation to another. A family may rely on a particular set of Medicaid services in one state, but may find themselves with far more limited services after moving to another state. The Extended Health Care Option (ECHO) was to be Congress' answer to these service gaps. ECHO is a health care option for active duty military families with special needs, created by TRICARE, the federal health insurance program for uniformed U.S. service members, retirees and their families.

TRICARE-ECHO provides consistent coverage across state lines for various medical services, rehabilitative services, and therapies associated with the treatment of developmental disabilities that state Medicaid programs usually cover. However, TRICARE-ECHO has its limitations when it is the sole insurance. For example, once active military members retire, their families will lose many of the TRICARE-ECHO benefits for their loved ones. On the other hand, they can still retain benefits under Arizona's DDD-ALTCS program.

Additionally, some of the benefits covered by Arizona's DDD-ALTCS program, but not included in TRICARE-ECHO are home care, attendant care (provided by family members/individuals not certified by TRICARE), and any kind of supported employment. Respite care, transportation support, in-home skilled nursing care, and day-care facilities for those with I/DD are also provided through DDD-ALTCS (See "TRICARE-ECHO VS. DDD-ALTCS SERVICES AT A GLANCE" chart). But instead of applying for DDD-ALTCS services to be used with TRICARE ECHO, many families opt to use their TRICARE-ECHO insurance alone, which does not provide all of the services their loved ones may need.

Military families that have individuals with disabilities in their family are confronted with many different barriers accessing I/DD services when relocating from state to state. Expedited state eligibility determinations, increased pre-relocation support from EFMPs, and prioritization of this population at a Congressional level would ensure that service members' loved ones with disabilities receive all the care they need. Our military members already sacrifice so much. These families should never have to make the decision whether or not they should leave their loved one behind to get the care they need.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Grant active military members an expedited status in eligibility determination through state programs, such as ALTCS-DDD.
- ✓ With the confirmation of military relocation orders to Arizona, allow eligibility for both DDD and ALTCS to be determined from out of state, using virtual means.
- ✓ EFMP should ease the burden on these families by helping them understand and apply for state services before they transfer to their newly assigned station.

TRICARE-ECHO VS. DDD-ALTCS SERVICES AT A GLANCE

(Created 11/2020)

Tri-Care Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) Plan:

ECHO provides financial assistance to beneficiaries with special needs for an integrated set of services and supplies. Must be enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). EFMP can be waived if the beneficiary resides with the custodial parent who isn't the active duty sponsor. Registration for ECHO with case managers in each Tricare region, contact case manager before move to combat times without service.

*Please note Tri-Care does assist families who have a member with autism, however it is not covered under ECHO. Autism coverage comes from TRICARE, Comprehensive Autism Care Demonstration.

*Please also note there are expanded in-home medical services through TRICARE ECHO Home Health Care (EHC) offers respite care (more than 16 hours), skilled nursing care, home health aid services, physical, occupational, and speech-language pathology therapies, medical social services, teaching and training activities, and medical supplies

** Tri-Care ECHO is a cost share program. After \$36,000, the military family bears the cost.

Arizona's Division of Developmental Disabilities – Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCSS): Services provided based on assessed need, medical necessity and cost effectiveness. Services are dependent on if the member is ALTCSS eligible. The Division cannot start or accept your application for eligibility more than 30 days prior to your move to Arizona.

Service	TRICARE-ECHO	Arizona DDD-ALTCS
Transportation	X	X
Community Based Housing Options		X
Respite Care*	X	X
Therapies	X	X
Rehabilitation	X	X
Employment Services		X
Assistive Technologies & Augmented Communications	X	X
Home Health Care	X	X
Day Treatment & Training	X	X
Special Education	X	
Behavioral Health	+	X
Home Nursing	X	X
Home Health Aide	X	X
Attendant Care		X
Institutional Care (in private nonprofit, public, & state facilities)	X	X
Incontinence Supplies (Diapers)	X	
Intensive Autism Services**		X

**TRICARE-ECHO Home Health Care (EHC) offers respite care (more than 16 hours), skilled nursing care, home health aid services, physical, occupational, and speech-language pathology therapies, medical social services, teaching and training activities, and medical supplies.*

***Autism coverage comes from TRICARE, Comprehensive Autism Care Demonstration.*

+ TRICARE covers behavioral health for psychiatric and substance use disorders

DEFINITIONS

Transportation covers medically necessary non-emergency transportation.

Community Based Housing Options group homes, adult developmental homes, and affordable housing options

Respite care provides a trained person to supervise and care for a member for a short period of time to relieve caregivers.

Therapies refer to physical, speech and occupational therapies to maintain or improve function.

Rehabilitation refers to regaining skills, abilities, or knowledge that may have been lost or compromised as a result of acquiring a disability or due to a change in one's disability or circumstances.

Employment Services are support and services that teach the skills necessary to obtain and keep a job.

Assistive Services help with communication, and can include a translator and augmented communication devices.

Day Treatment and Training Services are referred to as Day Programs and provide training, supervision, and activities to members to develop safety and socialization skills. This service is primarily offered in a community setting.

Behavioral Health Services assist, support, and encourage each eligible person to achieve and maintain health and self-sufficiency. Some examples include Behavior Management, Behavioral Health Nursing Services, Transportation, Evaluation, Counseling, Inpatient Hospital Services, Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities, Laboratory and Radiology Services for Psychotropic Medication Regulation and Diagnosis, and Opioid Agonist Treatment.

Home Nursing Services include skilled nursing provided in the person's home. Services may include care related to a specific condition or coordination of medical services.

Home Health Aides provide medically necessary health maintenance, continued treatment, or monitoring of health conditions in the person's home.

Attendant Care provides a trained direct care worker (DCW) to assist a member to create or maintain safe and healthy living conditions. The DCW also assists with maintaining personal cleanliness and activities of daily living. The DCW can be a paid family member if the member is an adult.

Institutional Care is provided in a hospital, nursing home, or other facility certified or licensed by the state primarily affording diagnostic, preventive, therapeutic, rehabilitative, maintenance, or personal care services.

Intensive Autism Services refer to providing caregivers a consultation and intervention plan to help preschoolers with autism or at risk for autism gain self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills needed to live successfully. It may include autism habilitation services for preschoolers.

Under Tri-Care ECHO: training, rehabilitation, special education, assistive technology devices, institutional care, home health care, respite care for the primary caregiver, incontinence supplies (diapers)

Under DDD: Medical services, homemaker, home nursing, home modifications, home health aide, habilitation, employment services, day treatment and training, attendant care

For more information on ECHO, please visit

<https://www.tricare.mil/Plans/SpecialPrograms/ECHO/Benefits>

<https://www.humanamilitary.com/beneficiary/benefit-guidance/special-programs/echo>

For more information on DDD, please visit

<https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/individuals-and-families/supports-and-services#top>



This report was created by the
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The Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council is made up of individuals with disabilities, family members, professional stakeholders and state agency representatives appointed by the Governor of Arizona. We envision one community working together to achieve full inclusion and participation of people with developmental disabilities. We collect and publish research, fund grants, advance inclusion through advocacy and promote self-determination.